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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
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INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2027
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9063
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7301
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5210
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3456
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5162
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0035
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0697
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4273
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9626
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6920
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0009
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3820
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001030

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

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SUBJECT: HANGING CHOD? GENERAL SARATH FONSEKA SUBMITS HIS
RESIGNATION

REF: A. COLOMBO 1019

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 1018

Classified By: AMBASSADOR Patricia A. Butenis. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Chief of Defense (CHOD) General Sarath Fonseka submitted his resignation to President Rajapaksa on November [1](#)12. Senior military officials in the Office of Chief of Defense Staff (OCDS), a Ministry of Defense official, United National Party (UNP) insiders and a retired military general with contacts in the military confirmed that the resignation was submitted and accepted by the president. The OCDS official, a member of General Fonseka's staff, also stated that the current Commander of the Sri Lankan Air Force (SLAF) Air Chief Marshall Roshan Goonetilleke, viewed as a man with little personal or professional ambition, will become the next CHOD. This would follow military precedent, as he is the senior serving flag officer. The Air Force Commander's replacement would likely be Air Vice Marshall P.B. Premachandra, an ethnic Tamil. If selected, Premachandra's elevation would likely be welcomed as an important symbolic gesture of Sinhalese-Tamil reconciliation and empowerment.

[1](#)2. (C) With this resignation, Fonseka is now free to enter politics. Rampant speculation on any such plans has dominated conversations in Colombo political circles over the past several weeks, with many assuming he would run against Mahinda Rajapaksa in presidential elections. President Rajapaksa has not yet announced presidential elections but is expected to speak at an SLFP party conference on Sunday, November 15. Many local observers believe he would announce at that meeting that elections would be held soon, perhaps as early as January. Fonseka's announcement prior to that speech leaves open the possibility that the president might hold off on calling for a presidential election, which does not need to be held for another two years.

BUTENIS